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ADDIS ABABA FOR AU WATCHERS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [UNGA](#) [AG](#) [ML](#) [MR](#) [NG](#) [US](#)  
SUBJECT: ALGERIA SEEKS SUPPORT FOR UN ACTION TO BAN RANSOM  
PAYMENTS

REF: ALGIERS 740

Classified By: Ambassador David D. Pearce; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: Algerian Presidential Counter Terrorism Advisor, Kamel Rezag Bara, said August 12 that Algeria sought U.S. support at the UN for an African Union initiative to strengthen the international legal regime against abductions, including a specific ban on ransom payments to terrorist groups. He clarified that the resolution intended to make payment of ransom to terrorists an international crime. He told a visiting National Defense University delegation that Algeria was interested in USG feedback on the proposal and expressed interest in consulting with the U.S. and other Perm Five missions in New York on next steps. Rezag Bara indicated the Algerians want to ensure support for their effort before advancing a draft, and would also preview the proposal with the Nonaligned and African groups soon. Rezag Bara said international cooperation was necessary to combat the influence of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and he expected a Sahel heads of state summit to convene in Mali within the next two to three months to discuss practical regional coordination against the AQIM threat. He said Algeria and the U.S. shared a common view of terrorism and welcomed stepped-up political engagement, technical assistance, and economic cooperation. Rezag Bara said the U.S. and others in the international community should help Sahel countries in the region regain stability and assist them in confronting terrorism via information and technical assistance but not try to do the job for them. END SUMMARY.

STEADY ENGAGEMENT NEEDED FOR MIL-MIL EXPANSION  
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12. (C) Algerian Presidential Counter Terrorism Advisor Kamel Rezag Bara briefed a visiting Capstone delegation of recently promoted U.S. admirals and generals August 12 on Algeria's counterterrorism (CT) efforts and approach to bilateral and multilateral CT cooperation. Immediately following 9/11, Rezag Bara said, President Bouteflika established a cabinet-level CT coordination group to evaluate and implement the recommendations contained in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1373 as well as to assess Algeria's CT cooperation with the international community. The group includes officials of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the security services, the Ministry of Interior, and the Finance Ministry. This step, he said, led to informal bilateral agreements to improve cooperation and efforts to secure Africa's commitment to combating terrorism, such as the 1999 adoption in Algiers of the OAU convention on

preventing and combating terrorism. The African Center for the Research and Study of Terrorism (CAERT), which has collaborated with U.S. universities and the National Defense University, was a direct outcome of the OAU convention, he added.

13. (C) Rezag Bara remarked that the international community at first considered Algeria's struggle with terrorism in the 1990s an internal matter and only slowly came to understand the transnational link to jihadist fighters returning from Afghanistan at the end of the Soviet conflict. "Thanks to Algeria's military, police, and citizens," he said, "we defeated terrorism militarily, politically, strategically, and morally." Bouteflika's national reconciliation charter further succeeded in conveying the message that Islam is not compatible with terrorism. Rezag Bara acknowledged, however, that al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) had established "some" presence in Algeria and was spreading in the northern Sahel region and Mauritania. Rezag Bara noted international cooperation was needed to combat AQIM and previewed plans for a regional heads of state summit in Mali, most likely within the next two to three months, to prepare an operational plan to fight AQIM.

14. (S) Rezag Bara told the Capstone audience that Algeria and the U.S. shared the same view of terrorism and the means necessary to combat it, despite some disagreements on Middle East policy. Asked how to improve mil-mil cooperation, Rezag Bara noted that for cooperation to work, both sides need to understand each other. At the political level, this meant more direct engagement and opportunities to talk and share ideas. "This visit is an example of the type of political engagement we need," he said. There was a further need for more technical cooperation, he continued, citing Algeria's interest in more sophisticated IED countermeasures. Rezag Bara also identified increased intelligence sharing, joint mil-mil activities, and closer economic ties outside of the hydrocarbon sector as other key areas of technical cooperation.

#### REINFORCING THE MESSAGE ON RANSOM PAYMENTS

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15. (C) Rezag Bara said Algeria sought support at the UN, either in the Security Council or General Assembly, for an African Union initiative that would strengthen the international legal regime against terrorist abductions, and specifically impose a ban on the payment of ransoms to terrorist groups, i.e., to make it an international crime to pay ransom to terrorists. He underscored Algeria's wish for U.S. support in this effort (reftel).

16. (C) Rezag Bara's deputy, Ambassador Ayadi, told Capstone that UNSCR 1373 had greatly limited terrorist organizations' ability to exploit the global financial system, forcing groups like AQIM to return to more primitive activities, like kidnapping, to fund operations. This trend, Ayadi stressed, threatened international security, particularly Somalia and the northern Sahel region. Recent kidnappings in northern Mali, he added, have demonstrated that paying ransoms only encourages terrorists to take more hostages. He noted that international law did not specifically address ransom payments. "For this reason, we want the international community to consider a legal instrument that supports existing laws to combat terrorist finance and specifically bans the payment of ransoms to terrorist groups," he said. A ban on ransoms, Ayadi argued, would give states the political cover they need to refuse ransom demands.

17. (C) Ayadi said Algeria's mission in New York planned to consult with Nonaligned Movement and Africa Group missions before presenting a text. Rezag Bara told Ambassador afterwards that the Algerian mission in New York would also likely consult the U.S. and other Perm Five missions on the initiative. He was particularly interested in U.S. views on how best to shape the initiative to maximize the chances for success, whether in the Security Council or the General

Assembly.

CAIRO AND GHANA MESSAGE ON THE RIGHT TRACK

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18. (C) Rezag Bara said President Obama used the right words in Cairo and Accra to express the U.S. commitment to better understanding the region. He urged the U.S. to use its influence as a stabilizing factor and regretted that some U.S. actions in recent years had complicated problems. Upholding the rule of law, including international law, was the best way to establish legitimacy in the fight against terrorism. Rezag Bara said the holding of enemy combatants at Guantanamo, 26 of whom were Algerian, was not consistent with Algeria's vision of the U.S. It was necessary for U.S. policy on Guantanamo to be corrected to restore America's image. Rezag Bara also told the delegation that it would be important for the U.S. to strike a clear and fair balance in promoting a two-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, one that would benefit both sides.

19. (S) COMMENT: At the outset of the meeting, Rezag Bara emphasized that President Bouteflika was aware of the Capstone program and conveyed Bouteflika's appreciation for the visit to Algeria. Rezag Bara assembled representatives from the ministries of defense, justice, and foreign affairs, as well as the Algerian military intelligence service, and clearly viewed the meeting as an opportunity to reiterate the scope of our bilateral CT cooperation. While expressing a desire for deeper mil-mil cooperation, Rezag Bara emphasized technical and intelligence cooperation and avoided discussion of joint exercises on Algerian territory and U.S. participation in regional security operations. Asked how the U.S. could help CT efforts in the Sahel beyond Algeria's borders, Rezag Bara replied, "The U.S. needs to help countries regain stability, but you need to help us do it ourselves, don't do it for us."

PEARCE